

SENATOR JOE BIDEN ON HEALTH CARE

“The 21st century starts with the promise of even greater advances in health care and the treatment of diseases. If we take the right steps now, we will be able to live fuller and longer lives.” -- Senator Joe Biden

THE BIDEN PLAN: A HEALTHIER AMERICA

- **Getting More Americans Health Insurance:** Senator Biden is committed to reducing the ranks of the uninsured -- especially the 9 million children without health insurance -- and improving American's access to essential health care services. He is working to provide health insurance to more Americans by:
 - Expanding the SCHIP program to allow more children to participate, and increasing outreach efforts to enroll every child eligible for SCHIP and Medicaid.
 - Encouraging and supporting state efforts to experiment with measures and programs to reduce the number of uninsured in their states.
 - Providing federal coverage for catastrophic cases so patients are not overly burdened with astronomical health care costs and to help lower premiums to make insurance more affordable for businesses and individuals.
- **Strengthening the Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Program:** Senator Biden fought for years to expand the Medicare program to cover prescription drugs with a plan that would provide valuable coverage, be easy to use, and affordable to most seniors. The present plan is complicated and has not done enough to keep drug costs down. Senator Biden supports improving the plan by:
 - ✓ Having the federal government directly negotiate for better drug prices from the pharmaceutical companies, as it does for other federal health programs. This should lower costs to consumers.
 - ✓ Closing the gap in benefits -- often called the “doughnut hole” -- that occurs once a retiree hits \$2,250 in coverage.
- **Funding Biomedical Research:** Senator Biden understands the important role the federal government plays in finding cures for cancer and other diseases by supporting important biomedical research. He is working to strengthen these efforts by:
 - ✓ Continuing robust funding for the National Institutes of Health, building on the successful effort that doubled NIH funding over five years.
 - ✓ Permitting federal funding to support stem cell research.
 - ✓ Investigating the link between environmental factors and breast cancer.
 - ✓ Developing vaccines and other effective responses to potential biological weapons.
- **Offering Americans Greater Access to Health Care:** Senator Biden wants to improve Americans' access to the health care system, as well as provide a better choice of providers and treatment settings through:

- ✓ Allowing disabled patients, especially those covered by Medicaid, to receive care in the least restrictive settings and to direct their own treatment plan.
 - ✓ Pursuing efforts to help small business owners and their employees join larger insurance pools to share risk and reduce the cost of insurance.
 - ✓ Increasing funding for community health centers that are a vital component to the health care safety net.
 - ✓ Working to ensure health insurance coverage of mental illness is comparable to that of other medical and surgical services.
- **Protecting the Privacy of Medical Records:** Senator Biden knows how important it is to patients that their personal medical information be kept private. He supports:
 - ✓ Making sure individuals' medical information is not used against them or unknowingly sold for commercial profit.
 - ✓ Ensuring that as we move toward more efficient, cost-saving electronic medical records, privacy interests remain a priority.
 - ✓ Preventing the use of predictive genetic information, such as whether someone carries the gene for breast cancer, from being used to discriminate against persons in decision-making related to employment or health insurance.

THE BIDEN RECORD: PROTECTION AND PREVENTION

- **Safeguarding Medicare and Medicaid:** Senator Biden has consistently fought efforts to undermine these important programs for our nation's seniors and low-income citizens, and has worked to enhance their effectiveness through:
 - ✓ Ensuring an adequate supply of physicians by opposing arbitrary caps on reimbursements and reforming the provider payment system.
 - ✓ Strengthening Medicare anti-fraud efforts.
 - ✓ Supporting increased federal Medicaid funding when states are faced with a fiscal crisis.
- **Fighting Breast Cancer:** Senator Biden has been a leader in efforts to detect, treat and prevent breast cancer, including:
 - ✓ Helping to enact the breast and cervical cancer prevention program to ensure mammograms are available to low-income women and women without health insurance, and then expanding the program to offer treatment.
 - ✓ Originating legislation passed in the Senate each year since 1993 recognizing National Mammography Day every October to encourage women to have mammograms.
 - ✓ Sponsoring legislation to expand Medicare to include coverage of mammograms.
 - ✓ Fighting to guarantee insurance companies do not deprive breast cancer survivors of reconstructive surgery.
- **Increasing the Supply of Nurses:** Recognizing the problems a nursing shortage presents, Senator Biden was an early supporter of the Nurse Reinvestment Act, providing scholarship and loan repayment programs for nursing students, awarding grants to nursing schools and health organizations, and promoting public information programs to encourage people to enter the nursing profession.

- **Ensuring Proper Health Care for America's Veterans:** Senator Biden has consistently fought for increased funding for VA health services to ensure proper care and administrative processing without imposing new fees and co-payments. He has also supported medical research of diseases and injuries that disproportionately affect veterans.
- **Providing Comprehensive Health Services for People with HIV/AIDS:** A co-sponsor of the original Ryan White CARE Act, Senator Biden has maintained his commitment to funding research and treatment for people with HIV/AIDS in the U.S., while also supporting international efforts to reduce the scourge of HIV/AIDS in Africa and developing countries around the world.
- **Improving Living Conditions for Disabled Citizens:** Senator Biden has long championed efforts to allow Medicaid to provide home- and community-based support services needed by disabled individuals to remain out of institutions. He also fought to allow low-income families with disabled children to buy into the Medicaid program.

SENATOR JOE BIDEN ON MEDICARE

"Politicians need to understand what it's like for people on Medicare, who are lying in bed staring at a ceiling wondering if they are going to be able to pay the bills. We need to understand their concerns and aspirations if we are going to reshape Medicare in the 21st Century." -- Senator Joe Biden

THE BIDEN PLAN: RESHAPING MEDICARE FOR THE 21st CENTURY

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 - ✓ Closing the gap in benefits – often called the “doughnut hole” -- that occurs once a retiree hits \$2,250 in coverage.
- **Stabilizing Medicare Reimbursement Formulas:** Senator Biden wants to stabilize the way Medicare determines reimbursement rates for physicians and other providers. As such, the Senator wants the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission to study and report to Congress on replacing the use of the sustainable growth rate as a factor in determining the update for such payments with a factor that more fully accounts for changes in the unit costs of providing physicians' services.

- **Ensuring Equitable Cost Sharing of Mental Health Services:** Senator Biden supports treating mental health services the same as other health services and increasing the amount the government pays from 50 percent to 80 for outpatient psychiatric services under the Medicare program.

THE BIDEN RECORD: PROTECTION AND PREVENTION

- **Promoting Breast Cancer Screening:** Senator Biden helped lead the effort to require Medicare to cover annual mammograms for women over the age of 65, and to exempt these procedures from the annual Medicare Part B deductible.
- **Ensuring Providers Are Available to Medicare Patients:** Senator Biden has consistently fought to ensure an adequate supply of physicians and other Medicare providers for our nation's seniors by opposing arbitrary caps on reimbursement and working to reform the provider payment system. He also has worked to preserve Medicare indirect medical education payments to teaching hospitals, as many of these facilities provide crucial care to Medicare beneficiaries.
- **Allowing Medicare Patients to Participate in Clinical Trials:** Senator Biden worked hard to ensure Medicare recipients are able to participate in groundbreaking medical studies on new treatments and medications.
- **Opposing Arbitrary Limits on Services:** To ensure Medicare beneficiaries received proper treatment, Senator Biden fought to prevent arbitrary monetary limits on Medicare coverage of physical, occupational, and speech therapy services.
- **Protecting Against Genetic Non-Discrimination:** Senator Biden has fought to prohibit an issuer of a Medicare supplemental policy, on the basis of genetic information, from denying or conditioning coverage, or discriminating in the pricing of the policy, including the adjustment rates, for an eligible individual.
- **Preserving Medicare for Retirees:** When the future of Medicare came under attack and was threatened with its gradual demise, Senator Biden stood steadfast in defense of Medicare.